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youth division of American Life League, Inc.



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**Cathy Brown, Director, *Why Life?***

**June 29, 2000**

**8:35 am**

**FDA OTC Part 15 Hearing  
Session: Oral Contraceptives**

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My name is Cathy Brown. I speak today as the director of Why Life?, the youth outreach program of the American Life League. I am speaking on behalf of over 30,000 members of generation X and Y with whom we communicate monthly and who have been personally affected by the contraceptive culture that we live in.

In the 1930's only one in seven marriages ended in divorce. By the 1960's when birth control was legalized and accepted by Americans nation-wide, divorce rates jumped to in four and there were only two common STD's—both of which were curable. Today teens are threatened by over 35 common STD's carrying hundreds of strains (many of which are not curable.) In addition, my generation and those younger have only a 50% chance of being in a marriage that lasts until "death do us part."<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Considering these devastating facts and the future of our nation, I would encourage the FDA to take a serious look at who will be most affected if the pill becomes available over-the-counter.

- Maybe it will be the twelve year old girl whose father is molesting her. Now he can be fairly certain that he'll never get caught. He can buy her birth control with no questions asked, no gynecological exam—no one to ask her why she is taking the pill.
- Or, maybe the sixteen year old who wants to sleep with her boyfriend after the prom. She can pick up the pills when she goes to get her make-up—no questions asked. She won't read the instructions—teens rarely do. She won't take them properly because there was no doctor present to tell her that they are not effective unless you've been taking them for at least one month. At sixteen, her chances of becoming a mother just increased drastically.
- Or, maybe the fourteen year old who has never talked to anyone about sex. She thinks the pill prevents disease, as many teens do, and again, won't bother to read the package insert. Rarely do adults read the package insert for over-the-counter drugs so what can we expect of a teen? Soon after she'll develop Chlamydia which may render her sterile if left untreated. And, since she didn't have to go to a doctor to get the pill, why would she even think of going to one for the slight symptoms that Chlamydia brings.

The pill already comes to teens at a very high risk. Even when regulated and monitored by a physician, side effects occur. With use that is both unregulated and unmonitored, teens stand to suffer even greater risks. No long term studies have been done on the safety

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<sup>1</sup>*Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts*, Dr. Les Parrott III & Dr. Leslie Parrott, 1995 p.11

<sup>2</sup>*Safe Sex*, Dr. Joe S. McIlhaney, Jr., M.D., 1990 p.8-11

<sup>3</sup>*Ceters for Disease Control* 1995.

of the pill, especially in young women. Risks range from minor side effects like weight gain and acne, to life threatening conditions like strokes, blood clots and breast cancer.

For the past three years I have been talking with teens who are using oral contraceptives through correspondence and e-mail at work and by volunteering my time with young women who are pregnant and unmarried. Overwhelmingly, they are misinformed about the birth control pill. Overwhelmingly, they wish that someone would have told them that abstinence was a viable option. Overwhelmingly the only time they ever talk seriously to anyone about the pill, is when they go to the doctor to have their prescriptions refilled. Or, when their contraception fails and they end up in need of a free pregnancy test at a local center.

Our young people are misinformed daily by their peers, teachers, and the media. Talking to and being examined by a doctor before taking the pill drastically increases a teen's chances of being properly informed. This type of information is essential for the continued health and well-being of our nation's youth.

Let us also not forget that if the birth control pill becomes an over-the counter pill, unplanned pregnancies will increase dramatically, as young women blindly take the pill with little to no regularity.

History has proven that contraception does not decrease the rate of unplanned pregnancies—even when monitored by a physician. According to the US Center for Health Studies, out of wedlock births jumped dramatically from 202,000 in 1957 to 1.3 million in 1994.<sup>4</sup> Can you imagine, then, what the increase will look like when doctors are removed from being in a position to explain how to properly take the pills?

An increase in unplanned pregnancies, will inevitably increase the number of abortions that are performed on teens and young adults. It should be obvious why providers of abortion want to see the pill become an over-the-counter drug. Over-the-counter birth control pill sales equals an increase in cash for distributors of the pill as more and more young women will be attracted to the idea of being able to buy contraception without seeing a doctor. And failure to use the pill correctly equals an increase in unplanned pregnancies, which equals an increase in the number of abortions performed. This formula translates into a plethora of cash for abortion providers.

It is no secret that an increase in contraceptive use is always accompanied by an increase in abortion. Even abortionists have attested to this fact. Malcom Potts, Medical Director of Planned Parenthood in the 70's—before abortion was legalized in America stated, "As people turn to contraception, there will be a rise, not a fall, in the abortion rate."<sup>5</sup> Empirical evidence confirms his statement: abortions - 1973 - 744,000; 1990 - 1.6 million<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>US Center for Health Studies as cited in New Perspectives on Contraception, by Donald DeMarco

<sup>5</sup>The Medical World, March and August 1973 as cited in *How Widespread Contraception*

Abortionist Judith Bury states, "There is overwhelming evidence that contrary to what you might expect, the provision of contraception leads to an increase in the abortion rate."<sup>7</sup>

And, an article in the British Medical Journal found that seven out of ten women who have unplanned pregnancies are using some form of contraception—while four out of ten were using the oral contraceptive pill.<sup>8</sup>

On behalf of young women across the nation who will be negatively affected if the pill is available over-the-counter, I plead with the FDA. Young women deserve to be protected and they deserve to be informed. Given what we know about the behavior patterns of teens it would be grave mistake to offer the birth control pill over the counter.

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*Leads to Abortion*, By Fr. Paul Marx.

<sup>6</sup>*New Perspectives on Contraception*, by Donald DeMarco, c. 1999, One More Soul,

<sup>7</sup>*The Scotsman*, June 29, 1981.

<sup>8</sup>*The British Medical Journal*.